

THE

EDMONDSON FAMILY,

AND THE

CAPTURE OF THE SCHOONER PEARL.

BY

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THE EDMONDSON FAMILY.

MILLY EDMONDSON is an aged woman, now upwards of seventy. She has received the slave's inheritance of entire ignorance. She can not read a letter of a book, nor write her own name; but the writer must say that she was never so impressed with any presentation of the Christian religion as that which was made to her in the language and appearance of this woman during the few interviews that she had with her. The circumstances of the interviews will be detailed at length in the course of the story.

Milly is above the middle height, of a large, full figure. She dresses with the greatest attention to neatness. A plain Methodist cap shades her face, and the plain white Methodist handkerchief is folded across

the bosom. A well-preserved stuff gown, and clean white apron, with a white pocket-handkerchief pinned to her side, completes the inventory of the costume in which the writer usually saw her. She is a mulatto, and must once have been a very handsome one. Her eyes and smile are still uncommonly beautiful, but there are deep-wrought lines of patient sorrow and weary endurance on her face, which tell that this lovely and noble-hearted woman has been all her life a slave.

Milly Edmondson was kept by her owners and allowed to live with her husband, with the express understanding and agreement that her service and value was to consist in breeding up her own children to be sold in the slave-market. Her legal owner was a maiden lady of feeble capacity, who was set aside by the decision of court as incompetent to manage her affairs.

The estate—that is to say, Milly Edmondson and her children—was placed in the care of a guardian. It appears that Milly's poor, infirm mistress was fond of her, and that Milly exercised over her much of that ascen-

dency which a strong mind holds over a weak one. Milly's husband, Paul Edmondson, was a free man. A little of her history, as she related it to the writer, will now be given in her own words:

"Her mistress," she said, "was always kind to her, 'poor thing!' but then she had n't *sperit* ever to speak for herself, and her friends would n't never let her have her own way. It always laid on my mind," she said, "that I was a slave. When I wan't more than fourteen years old, Misses was doing some work one day that she thought she could n't trust me with, and she says to me, 'Milly, now you see it's I that am the slave, and not you.' I says to her, 'Ah, Missis, I am a poor slave, for all that.' I's sorry afterwards I said it, for I thought it seemed to hurt her feelings.

"Well, after a while, when I got engaged to Paul, I loved Paul very much; but I thought it wan't right to bring children into the world to be slaves, and I told our folks that I was never going to marry, though I did love Paul. But that wan't to be allowed," she said, with a mysterious air.

“What do you mean?” said I.

“Well, they told me I must marry, or I should be turned out of the church—so it was,” she added, with a significant nod.—“Well, Paul and me, we was married, and we was happy enough, if it had n’t been for that; but when our first child was born I says to him, ‘There ’t is, now, Paul, our troubles is begun; this child is n’t ours.’ And every child I had, it grew worse and worse. ‘O Paul,’ says I, ‘what a thing it is to have children that is n’t ours!’ Paul he says to me, ‘Milly, my dear, if they be God’s children, it an’t so much matter whether they be ours or no; they may be heirs of the kingdom, Milly, for all that.’ Well, when Paul’s mistress died, she set him free, and he got him a little place out about fourteen miles from Washington; and they let me live out there with him, and take home my tasks; for they had that confidence in me that they always know’d that what I said I’d do was as good done as if they’d seen it done. I had mostly sewing; sometimes a shirt to make in a day,—it was coarse like, you know,—or a pair of sheets, or some such; but, whatever

't was, I always got it done. Then I had all my housework and babies to take care of; and many's the time, after ten o'clock, I've took my children's clothes and washed 'em all out and ironed 'em late in the night, 'cause I could n't never bear to see my children dirty, —always wanted to see 'em sweet and clean, and I brought 'em up and taught 'em the very best ways I was able. But nobody knows what I suffered; I never see a white man come on to the place that I did n't think, 'There, now, he's coming to look at my children;' and when I saw any white man going by, I've called in my children and hid 'em, for fear he'd see 'em and want to buy em. O, ma'am, mine's been a long sorrow, a long sorrow! I've borne this heavy cross a great many years."

"But," said I, "the Lord has been with you."

She answered, with very strong emphasis, "Ma'am, if the Lord had n't held me up, I should n't have been alive this day. O, sometimes my heart's been so heavy, it seemed as if I *must* die; and then I've been to the throne of grace, and when I'd poured

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out all my sorrows there, I came away *light*, and felt that I could live a little longer."

This language is exactly her own. She had often a forcible and peculiarly beautiful manner of expressing herself, which impressed what she said strongly.

Paul and Milly Edmondson were both devout communicants in the Methodist Episcopal Church at Washington, and the testimony to their blamelessness of life and the consistence of their piety is unanimous from all who know them. In their simple cottage, made respectable by neatness and order, and hallowed by morning and evening prayer, they trained up their children, to the best of their poor ability, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to be sold in the slave-market. They thought themselves only too happy, as one after another arrived at the age when they were to be sold, that they were hired to families in their vicinity, and not thrown into the trader's pen to be drafted for the dreaded southern market!

The mother, feeling, with a constant but repressed anguish, the weary burden of slavery which lay upon her, was accustomed, as

she told the writer, thus to warn her daughters :

“ Now, girls, don’t you never come to the sorrows that I have. Don’t you never marry till you get your liberty. Don’t you marry, to be mothers to *children that an’t your own.*”

As a result of this education, some of her older daughters, in connection with the young men to whom they were engaged, raised the sum necessary to pay for their freedom before they were married. One of these young women, at the time that she paid for her freedom, was in such feeble health that the physician told her that she could not live many months, and advised her to keep the money, and apply it to making herself as comfortable as she could.

She answered, “ If I had only two hours to live, I would pay down that money to die free.”

If this was setting an extravagant value on liberty, it is not for an American to say so.

All the sons and daughters of this family were distinguished both for their physical and mental developements, and therefore

were priced exceedingly high in the market. The whole family, rated by the market prices which have been paid for certain members of it, might be estimated as an estate of fifteen thousand dollars. They were distinguished for intelligence, honesty and faithfulness, but above all for the most devoted attachment to each other. These children, thus intelligent, were all held as slaves in the city of Washington, the very capital where our national government is conducted. Of course, the high estimate which their own mother taught them to place upon liberty was in the way of being constantly strengthened and reinforced by such addresses, celebrations and speeches, on the subject of liberty, as every one knows are constantly being made, on one occasion or another, in our national capital.

On the 13th day of April, the little schooner PEARL, commanded by Daniel Drayton, came to anchor in the Potomac river, at Washington.

The news had just arrived of a revolution in France, and the establishment of a democratic government, and all Washington was turning out to celebrate the triumph of Liberty.

The trees in the avenue were fancifully hung with many-colored lanterns,—drums beat, bands of music played, the houses of the President and other high officials were illuminated, and men, women and children, were all turned out to see the procession, and to join in the shouts of liberty that rent the air. Of course, all the slaves of the city, lively, fanciful and sympathetic, most excitable as they are by music and by dazzling spectacles, were everywhere listening, seeing, and rejoicing, in ignorant joy. All the heads of department, senators, representatives, and dignitaries of all kinds, marched in procession to an open space on Pennsylvania Avenue, and there delivered congratulatory addresses on the progress of universal freedom. With unheard-of imprudence, the most earnest defenders of slave-holding institutions poured down on the listening crowd, both of black and white, bond and free, the most inflammatory and incendiary sentiments. Such, for example, as the following language of Hon. Frederick P. Stanton, of Tennessee:

“We do not, indeed, propagate our principles with the sword of power; but there is

one sense in which we are propagandists. We can not help being so. Our example is contagious. In the section of this great country where I live, on the banks of the mighty Mississippi river, we have the true emblem of the tree of liberty. There you may see the giant cotton-wood spreading his branches widely to the winds of heaven. Sometimes the current lays bare his roots, and you behold them extending far around, and penetrating to an immense depth in the soil. When the season of maturity comes, the air is filled with a cotton-like substance, which floats in every direction, bearing on its light wings the living seeds of the mighty tree. Thus the seeds of freedom have emanated from the tree of our liberties. They fill the air. They are wafted to every part of the habitable globe. And even in the barren sands of tyranny they are destined to take root. The tree of liberty will spring up everywhere, and nations shall recline in its shade."

Senator Foote, of Mississippi, also, used this language :

"Such has been the extraordinary course of events in France, and in Europe, within the

last two months, that the more deliberately we survey the scene which has been spread out before us, and the more rigidly we scrutinize the conduct of its actors, the more confident does our conviction become that the *glorious work* which has been so well begun can not possibly fail of complete accomplishment; that the age of TYRANTS AND SLAVERY is rapidly drawing to a close; and that the happy period to be signalized by the *universal emancipation of man* from the *fetters of civil oppression*, and the recognition in all countries of the great principles of *popular sovereignty, equality, and BROTHERHOOD*, is, at this moment, visibly commencing."

Will any one be surprised, after this, that seventy-seven of the most intelligent young slaves, male and female, in Washington city, honestly taking Mr. Foote and his brother senators at their word, and believing that the age of tyrants and slavery was drawing to a close, banded together, and made an effort to obtain their part in this reign of universal brotherhood?

The schooner Pearl was lying in the harbor,

and Captain Drayton was found to have the heart of a man. Perhaps he, too, had listened to the addresses on Pennsylvania Avenue, and thought, in the innocence of his heart, that a man who really *did* something to promote universal emancipation was no worse than the men who only made speeches about it.

At any rate, Drayton was persuaded to allow these seventy-seven slaves to secrete themselves in the hold of his vessel, and among them were six children of Paul and Milly Edmondson. The incidents of the rest of the narrative will now be given, as obtained from Mary and Emily Edmondson, by the lady in whose family they have been placed by the writer for an education.

Some few preliminaries may be necessary in order to understand the account.

A respectable colored man, by the name of Daniel Bell, who had purchased his own freedom, resided in the city of Washington. His wife, with her eight children, were set free by her master, when on his death-bed. The heirs endeavored to break the will, on the ground that he was not of sound mind

at the time of its preparation. The magistrate, however, before whom it was executed, by his own personal knowledge of the competence of the man at the time, was enabled to defeat their purpose—the family, therefore, lived as free for some years. On the death of this magistrate, the heirs again brought the case into court; and, as it seemed likely to be decided against the family, they resolved to secure their legal rights by flight, and engaged passage on board the vessel of Captain Drayton. Many of their associates and friends, stirred up, perhaps, by the recent demonstrations in favor of liberty, begged leave to accompany them in their flight. The seeds of the cotton-wood were flying everywhere, and springing up in all hearts; so that, on the eventful evening of the 15th of April, 1848, not less than seventy-seven men, women, and children, with beating hearts and anxious secrecy, stowed themselves away in the hold of the little schooner, and Captain Drayton was so wicked, that he could not, for the life of him, say “Nay” to one of them.

Richard Edmondson had long sought to buy his liberty; had toiled for it early and late; but the price set upon him was so high, that he despaired of ever earning it. On this evening, he and his three brothers thought, as the reign of universal brotherhood had begun, and the reign of tyrants and slavery come to an end, that they would take to themselves and their sisters that sacred gift of liberty, which all Washington had been informed, two eyenings before, it was the peculiar province of America to give to all nations. Their two sisters, aged sixteen and fourteen, were hired out in families in the city. On this evening Samuel Edmondson called at the house where Emily lived, and told her of the projected plan.

“But what will mother think?” said Emily.

“Don’t stop to think of her; she would rather we’d be free, than to spend time to talk about her.”

“Well, then, if Mary will go, I will.”

The girls give as a reason for wishing to escape, that though they had never suffered hardships or been treated unkindly, yet they

knew they were liable at any time to be sold into rigorous bondage, and separated far from all they loved.

They then all went on board the Pearl, which was lying a little way off from the place where vessels usually anchor. There they found a company of slaves, seventy-seven in number.

At twelve o'clock at night the silent wings of the little schooner were spread, and with her weight of fear and mystery she glided out into the stream. A fresh breeze sprang up, and by eleven o'clock next night they had sailed two hundred miles from Washington, and began to think that liberty was gained. They anchored in a place called Cornfield Harbor, intending to wait for daylight. All laid down to sleep in peaceful security, lulled by the gentle rock of the vessel and the rippling of the waters.

But at two o'clock at night they were roused by terrible noises on deck, scuffling, screaming, swearing, and groaning. A steamer had pursued and overtaken them, and the little schooner was boarded by an infuriated set of armed men. In a moment

the captain, mate, and all the crew, were seized and bound, amid oaths and dreadful threats. As they, swearing and yelling, tore open the hatches on the defenceless prisoners below, Richard Edmondson stepped forward, and in a calm voice said to them, "Gentlemen, do yourselves no harm, for we are all here." With this exception, all was still among the slaves as despair could make it; not a word was spoken in the whole company. The men were all bound, and placed on board the steamer; the women were left on board the schooner, to be towed after.

The explanation of their capture was this: In the morning after they had sailed, many families in Washington found their slaves missing, and the event created as great an excitement as the emancipation of France had, two days before. At that time they had listened in the most complacent manner to the announcement that the reign of slavery was near its close, because they had not the slightest idea that the language meant anything, and they were utterly confounded by this practical application of it. More

than a hundred men, mounted upon horses, determined to push out into the country in pursuit of these new disciples of the doctrine of universal emancipation. Here a colored man, by the name of Judson Diggs, betrayed the whole plot. He had been provoked, because, after having taken a poor woman, with her luggage, down to the boat, she was unable to pay the twenty-five cents that he demanded. So he told these admirers of universal brotherhood, that they need not ride into the country, as their slaves had sailed down the river, and were far enough off by this time. A steamer was immediately manned by two hundred armed men, and away they went in pursuit.

When the cortege arrived with the captured slaves, there was a most furious excitement in the city. The men were driven through the streets bound with ropes, two and two. Showers of taunts and jeers rained upon them from all sides. One man asked one of the girls if she "didn't feel pretty to be caught running away," and another asked her "if she was n't sorry." She answered, "No; if it was to do again to-

morrow, she would do the same." The man turned to a bystander and said, "Ha n't she got good spunk?"

But the most vehement excitement was against Drayton and Sayres, the captain and mate of the vessel. Ruffians, armed with dirk-knives and pistols, crowded around them, with the most horrid threats. One of them struck so near Drayton as to cut his ear, which Emily noticed as bleeding. Meanwhile there mingled in the crowd multitudes of the relatives of the captives, who, looking on them as so many doomed victims, bewailed and lamented them. A brother-in-law of the Edmondsons was so overcome when he saw them, that he fainted away and fell down in the street, and was carried home insensible. The sorrowful news spread to the cottage of Paul and Milly Edmondson; and, knowing that all their children were now probably doomed to the southern market, they gave themselves up to sorrow. "Oh, what a day that was!" said the old mother, when describing that scene to the writer. "Never a morsel of anything could I put into my mouth. Paul

and me we fasted and prayed before the Lord, night and day, for our poor children."

The whole public sentiment of the community was roused to the most intense indignation. It was repeated from mouth to mouth, that they had been kindly treated and never abused; and what could have induced them to try to get their liberty? All that Mr. Stanton had said of the insensible influence of American institutions, and all his pretty similes about the cotton-wood seeds, seemed entirely to have escaped the memory of the community, and they could see nothing but the most unheard-of depravity in the attempt of these people to secure freedom. It was strenuously advised by many that their owners should not forgive them—that no mercy should be shown, but that they should be thrown into the hands of the traders, forthwith, for the southern market—that Siberia of the irresponsible despots of America.

When all the prisoners were lodged in jail, the owners came to make oath to their property, and the property also was required to make oath to their owners. Among them

came the married sisters of Mary and Emily, but were not allowed to enter the prison. The girls looked through the iron grates of the third story windows, and saw their sisters standing below in the yard weeping.

The guardian of the Edmondsons, who acted in the place of the real owner, apparently touched with their sorrow, promised their family and friends, who were anxious to purchase them, if possible, that they should have an opportunity the next morning. Perhaps he intended at the time to give them one; but, as Bruin and Hill, the keepers of the large slave warehouse in Alexandria, offered him four thousand five hundred dollars for the six children, they were irrevocably sold before the next morning. Bruin would listen to no terms which any of their friends could propose. The lady with whom Mary had lived offered a thousand dollars for her; but Bruin refused, saying he could get double that sum in the New Orleans market. He said he had had his eye upon the family for twelve years, and had the promise of them should they ever be sold.

While the girls remained in the prison they had no beds or chairs, and only one blanket each, though the nights were chilly; but, understanding that the rooms below, where their brothers were confined, were still colder, and that no blankets were given them, they sent their own down to them. In the morning they were allowed to go down into the yard for a few moments; and then they used to run to the window of their brothers' room to bid them good-morning, and kiss them through the grate.

At ten o'clock, Thursday night, the brothers were handcuffed, and, with their sisters, taken into carriages by their new owners, driven to Alexandria, and put into a prison called a Georgia Pen. The girls were put into a large room alone, in total darkness, without bed or blanket, where they spent the night in sobs and tears, in utter ignorance of their brothers' fate. At eight o'clock in the morning they were called to breakfast, when, to their great comfort, they found their four brothers all in the same prison.

They remained here about four weeks, being usually permitted by day to stay below with their brothers, and at night to return to their own rooms. Their brothers had great anxieties about them, fearing they would be sold south. Samuel, in particular, felt very sadly, as he had been the principal actor in getting them away. He often said he would gladly *die* for them, if that would save them from the fate he feared. He used to weep a great deal, though he endeavored to restrain his tears in their presence.

While in the slave-prison they were required to wash for thirteen men, though their brothers performed a great share of the labor. Before they left, their size and height were measured by their owners. At length they were again taken out, the brothers handcuffed, and all put on board a steamboat, where were about forty slaves, mostly men, and taken to Baltimore. The voyage occupied one day and a night. When arrived in Baltimore, they were thrown into a slave-pen kept by a partner of Bruin and Hill. He was a man of coarse habits, constantly using the most profane

language, and grossly obscene and insulting in his remarks to women. Here they were forbidden to pray together, as they had previously been accustomed to do. But, by rising very early in the morning, they secured to themselves a little interval which they could employ, uninterrupted, in this manner. They, with four or five other women in the prison, used to meet together before daybreak, to spread their sorrows before the Refuge of the afflicted; and in these prayers the hard-hearted slave-dealer was daily remembered. The brothers of Mary and Emily were very gentle and tender in their treatment of their sisters, which had an influence upon other men in their company.

At this place they became acquainted with Aunt Rachel, a most godly woman, about middle age, who had been sold into the prison away from her husband. The poor husband used often to come to the prison, and beg the trader to sell her to *his* owners, who he thought were willing to purchase her, if the price was not too high. But he was driven off with brutal threats

and curses. They remained in Baltimore about three weeks.

The friends in Washington, though hitherto unsuccessful in their efforts to redeem the family, were still exerting themselves in their behalf; and one evening a message was received from them, by telegraph, stating that a person would arrive in the morning train of cars prepared to bargain for the family, and that a part of the money was now ready. But the trader was inexorable; and, in the morning, an hour before the cars were to arrive, they were all put on board the brig *Union*, ready to sail for New Orleans. The messenger came, and brought nine hundred dollars in money, the gift of a grandson of John Jacob Astor. This was finally appropriated to the ransom of Richard Edmondson, as his wife and children were said to be suffering in Washington; and the trader would not sell the girls to them upon any consideration, nor would he even suffer Richard to be brought back from the brig, which had not yet sailed. The bargain was, however, made, and the money deposited in Baltimore.

On this brig the eleven women were put in one small apartment, and the thirty or forty men in an adjoining one. Emily was very sea-sick most of the time, and her brothers feared she would die. They used to come and carry her out on deck and back again, buy little comforts for their sisters, and take all possible care of them.

Frequently head winds blew them back, so that they made very slow progress; and in their prayer-meetings, which they held every night, they used to pray that head winds might blow them to New York; and one of the sailors declared, that if they could get within one hundred miles of New York, and the slaves would stand by him, he would make way with the captain, and pilot them into New York himself.

When they arrived near Key West, they hoisted a signal for a pilot, the captain being aware of the dangers of the place, and yet not knowing how to avoid them. As the pilot-boat approached, the slaves were all fastened below, and a heavy canvas thrown over the grated hatchway door, which entirely excluded all circulation of air, and

almost produced suffocation. The captain and pilot had a long talk about the price, and some altercation ensued, the captain not being willing to give the price demanded by the pilot; during which time there was great suffering below. The women became so exhausted that they were mostly helpless; and the situation of the men was not much better, though they managed with a stick to break some holes through the canvas on their side, so as to let in a little air, but a few only of the strongest could get there to enjoy it. Some of them shouted for help as long as their strength would permit; and at length, after what seemed to them an almost interminable interview, the pilot left, refusing to assist them; the canvas was removed, and the brig obliged to turn tack, and take another course. Then, one after another, as they got air and strength, they crawled out on deck. Mary and Emily were carried out by their brothers as soon as they were able to do it.

Soon after this the stock of provisions run low, and the water failed, so that the slaves were restricted to a gill a day. The sailors

were allowed a quart each, and often gave a pint of it to one of the Edmondsons for their sisters; and they divided it with the other women, as they always did every nice thing they got in such ways.

The day they arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi a terrible storm arose, and the waves rolled mountain high, so that, when the pilot-boat approached, it would sometimes seem to be entirely swallowed by the waves, and again it would emerge, and again appear wholly buried. At length they were towed into and up the river by a steamer, and there, for the first time, saw cotton plantations, and gangs of slaves at work on them.

They arrived at New Orleans in the night, and about ten the next day were landed and marched to what they called the show-rooms, and, going out into the yard, saw a great many men and women sitting around, with such sad faces that Emily soon began to cry, upon which an overseer stepped up and struck her on the chin, and bade her "stop crying, or he would give her something to cry about." Then pointing, he told her

“there was the calaboose, where they whipped those who did not behave themselves !” As soon as he turned away, a slave-woman came and told her to look cheerful, if she possibly could, as it would be far better for her. One of her brothers soon came to inquire what the woman had been saying to her; and when informed, encouraged Emily to follow the advice, and endeavored to profit by it himself.

That night all the four brothers had their hair cut close, their mustaches shaved off, and their usual clothing exchanged for a blue jacket and pants, all of which so altered their appearance, that at first their sisters did not know them. Then, for three successive days, they were all obliged to stand in an open porch, fronting the street, for passers-by to look at; except, when one was tired out, she might go in for a little time, and another take her place. Whenever buyers called, they were paraded in the auction-room in rows, exposed to coarse jokes and taunts. When any one took a liking to any girl in the company, he would call her to him, take hold of her, open her

mouth, look at her teeth, and handle her person rudely, frequently making obscene remarks; and she must stand and bear it, without resistance. Mary and Emily complained to their brothers, that they could not submit to such treatment. They conversed about it with Wilson, a partner of Bruin and Hill, who had the charge of the slaves at this prison. After this, they were treated with more decency.

Another brother of the girls, named Hamilton, had been a slave in or near New Orleans for sixteen years, and had just purchased his own freedom for one thousand dollars; having once before earned that sum for himself, and then had it taken from him. Richard being now really free, as the money was deposited in Baltimore for his ransom, found him out the next day after their arrival at New Orleans, and brought him to the prison to see his brothers and sisters. The meeting was overpoweringly affecting.

He had never before seen his sister Emily, as he had been sold away from his parents before her birth.

The girls' lodging-room was occupied at night by about twenty or thirty women, who all slept on the bare floor, with only a blanket each. After a few days, word was received (which was *really incorrect*), that half the money had been raised for the redemption of Mary and Emily. After this, they were allowed, upon their brother's earnest request, to go to their free brother's house and spend their nights, and return in the mornings, as they had suffered greatly from the mosquitoes and other insects, and their feet were swollen and sore.

While at this prison, some horrible cases of cruelty came to their knowledge, and some of them under their own observation. Two persons, one woman and one boy, were whipped to death in the prison while they were there, though they were not in the same pen, or owned by the same trader, as themselves.

None of the slaves were allowed to sleep in the day-time, and sometimes little children, sitting or standing idle all day, would become so sleepy as not to be able to hold up their eyelids; but, if they were caught

thus by the overseer, they were cruelly beaten. Mary and Emily used to watch the little ones, and let them sleep until they heard the overseers coming, and then spring and rouse them in a moment.

One young woman, who had been sold by the traders for the worst of purposes, was returned, not being fortunate (?) enough to suit her purchaser; and, as is their custom in such cases, was most cruelly flogged—so much so that some of her flesh mortified, and her life was despaired of. When Mary and Emily first arrived at New Orleans, they saw and conversed with her. She was then just beginning to sit up; was quite small, and very fine-looking, with beautiful straight hair, which was formerly long, but had been cut off short by her brutal tormentors.

The overseer who flogged her said, in their hearing, that he would never flog another girl in that way—it was too much for any one to bear. They suggest that perhaps the reason why he promised this was, because he was obliged to be her nurse, and of course saw her sufferings. She was from Alexandria, but they have forgotten her name.

One young man and woman of their company in the prison, who were engaged to be married, and were sold to different owners, felt so distressed at their separation, that they could not, or did not, labor well; and the young man was soon sent back, with the complaint that he would not answer the purpose. Of course, the money was to be refunded, and he flogged. He was condemned to be flogged each night for a week; and, after about two hundred lashes by the overseer, each one of the male slaves in the prison was required to come and lay on five lashes with all his strength, upon penalty of being flogged himself. The young woman, too, was soon sent there, with a note from her new mistress, requesting that she might be whipped a certain number of lashes, and enclosing the money to pay for it; which request was readily complied with.

While in New Orleans they saw gangs of women cleaning the streets, chained together, some with a heavy iron ball attached to the chain; a form of punishment frequently resorted to for household servants who had displeased their mistresses.

Hamilton Edmondson, the brother who had purchased his own freedom, made great efforts to get good homes for his brothers and sisters in New Orleans, so that they need not be far separated from each other. One day, Mr. Wilson, the overseer, took Samuel away with him in a carriage, and returned without him. The brothers and sisters soon found that he was sold, and gone they knew not whither ; but they were not allowed to weep, or even look sad, upon pain of severe punishment. The next day, however, to their great joy, he came to the prison himself, and told them he had a good home in the city with an Englishman, who had paid a thousand dollars for him.

After remaining about three weeks in this prison, the Edmondsons were told that, in consequence of the prevalence of the yellow fever in the city, together with the fact of their not being acclimated, it was deemed dangerous for them to remain there longer ; and, besides this, purchasers were loth to give good prices under these circumstances. Some of the slaves in the pen were already sick ; some of them old, poor or dirty, and

for these reasons greatly exposed to sickness. Richard Edmondson had already been ransomed, and must be sent back ; and, upon the whole, it was thought best to fit out and send off a gang to Baltimore, without delay.

The Edmondsons received these tidings with joyful hearts, for they had not yet been undeceived with regard to the raising of the money for their ransom. Their brother who was free procured for them many comforts for the voyage, such as a mattress, blankets, sheets and different kinds of food and drink ; and, accompanied to the vessel by their friends there, they embarked on the brig Union just at night, and were towed out of the river. The brig had nearly a full cargo of cotton, molasses, sugar, &c., and, of course, the space for the slaves was exceedingly limited. The place allotted the females was a little close, filthy room, perhaps eight or ten feet square, filled with cotton within two or three feet of the top of the room, except the space directly under the hatchway door. Richard Edmondson kept his sisters upon deck with him, though without a shelter ; prepared their food himself, made up their

bed at night on the top of barrels, or wherever he could find a place, and then slept by their side. Sometimes a storm would arise in the middle of the night, when he would spring up and wake them, and, gathering up their bed and bedding, conduct them to a little kind of a pantry, where they could all three just stand, till the storm passed away. Sometimes he contrived to make a temporary shelter for them out of bits of boards, or something else on deck.

After a voyage of sixteen days, they arrived at Baltimore, fully expecting that their days of slavery were numbered. Here they were conducted back to the same old prison from which they had been taken a few weeks before, though they supposed it would be but for an hour or two. Presently Mr. Bigelow, of Washington, came for Richard. When the girls found that they were not to be set free too, their grief and disappointment were unspeakable. But they were *separated*,—Richard to go to his home, his wife and children, and they to remain in the slave-prison. Wearisome days and nights again rolled on. In the mornings they were obliged

to march round the yard to the music of fiddles, banjos, &c.; in the day-time they washed and ironed for the male slaves, slept some, and wept a great deal. After a few weeks their father came to visit them, accompanied by their sister.

His object was partly to ascertain what were the very lowest terms upon which their keeper would sell the girls, as he indulged a faint hope that in some way or other the money might be raised, if time enough were allowed. The trader declared he should soon send them to some other slave-market, but he would wait two weeks, and, if the friends could raise the money in that time, they might have them.

The night their father and sister spent in the prison with them, he lay in the room over their heads; and they could hear him groan all night, while their sister was weeping by their side. None of them closed their eyes in sleep.

In the morning came again the wearisome routine of the slave-prison. Old Paul walked quietly into the yard, and sat down to see the poor slaves marched around. He had

never seen his daughters in such circumstances before, and his feelings quite overcame him. The yard was narrow, and the girls, as they walked by him, almost brushing him with their clothes, could just hear him groaning within himself, "O, my children, my children!"

After the breakfast, which none of them were able to eat, they parted with sad hearts, the father begging the keeper to send them to New Orleans, if the money could not be raised, as perhaps their brothers there might secure for them kind masters.

Two or three weeks afterwards, Bruin and Hill visited the prison, dissolved partnership with the trader, settled accounts, and took the Edmondsons again in their own possession.

The girls were roused about eleven o'clock at night, after they had fallen asleep, and told to get up directly, and prepare for going home. They had learned that the word of a slave-holder is not to be trusted, and feared they were going to be sent to Richmond, Virginia, as there had been talk of it. They were soon on their way in the cars with

Bruin, and arrived at Washington at a little past midnight.

Their hearts throbbed high when, after these long months of weary captivity, they found themselves once more in the city where were their brothers, sisters and parents. But they were permitted to see none of them, and were put into a carriage and driven immediately to the slave-prison at Alexandria, where, about two o'clock at night, they found themselves in the same forlorn old room in which they had begun their term of captivity!

This was the latter part of August. Again they were employed in washing, ironing and sewing by day, and always locked up by night. Sometimes they were allowed to sew in Bruin's house, and even to eat there. After they had been in Alexandria two or three weeks, their eldest married sister, not having heard from them for some time, came to see Bruin, to learn, if possible, something of their fate; and her surprise and joy were great to see them once more, even there. After a few weeks their old father came again to see them. Hopeless as the idea of their emancipation seemed, he still clung to it.

He had had some encouragement of assistance in Washington, and he purposed to go north to see if anything could be done there; and he was anxious to obtain from Bruin what were the very lowest possible terms for which he would sell the girls. Bruin drew up his terms in the following document, which we subjoin:

“ALEXANDRIA, VA., Sept. 5, 1848.

The bearer, Paul Edmondson, is the father of two girls, Mary Jane and Emily Catharine Edmondson. These girls have been purchased by us, and once sent to the south; and, upon the positive assurance that the money for them would be raised if they were brought back, they were returned. Nothing, it appears, has as yet been done in this respect by those who promised, and we are on the very eve of sending them south the second time; and we are candid in saying that, if they go again, we will not regard any promises made in relation to them. The father wishes to raise money to pay for them; and intends to appeal to the liberality of the humane and the good to aid him, and has requested us to state in writing *the*

conditions upon which we will sell his daughters.

We expect to start our servants to the south in a few days ; if the sum of twelve hundred (\$1200) dollars be raised and paid to us in fifteen days, or we be assured of that sum, then we will retain them for twenty-five days more, to give an opportunity for the raising of the other thousand and fifty (\$1050) dollars ; otherwise we shall be compelled to send them along with our other servants.

BRUIN & HILL."

Paul took his papers, and parted from his daughters sorrowfully. After this, the time to the girls dragged on in heavy suspense. Constantly they looked for letter or message, and prayed to God to raise them up a deliverer from some quarter. But day after day and week after week passed, and the dreaded time drew near. The preliminaries for fitting up the gang for South Carolina commenced. Gay calico was bought for them to make up into "show dresses," in which they were to be exhibited on sale. They made them up with far sadder feelings than they would have

sewed on their own shrouds. Hope had almost died out of their bosoms. A few days before the gang were to be sent off, their sister made them a sad farewell visit. They mingled their prayers and tears, and the girls made up little tokens of remembrance to send by her as parting gifts to their brothers and sisters, and aged father and mother, and with a farewell sadder than that of a death-bed, the sisters parted.

The evening before the coffin was to start drew on. Mary and Emily went to the house to bid Bruin's family good-by. Bruin had a little daughter who had been a pet and favorite with the girls. She clung round them, cried, and begged them not to go. Emily told her that, if she wished to have them stay, she must go and ask her father. Away ran the little pleader, full of her errand; and was so very earnest in her importunities, that he, to pacify her, said he would consent to their remaining, if his partner, Captain Hill, would do so. At this time Bruin, hearing Mary crying aloud in the prison, went up to see her. With all the earnestness of despair, she made her last appeal to his feelings. She

begged him to make the case his own, to think of his own dear little daughter,—what if she were exposed to be torn away from every friend on earth, and cut off from all hope of redemption, at the very moment, too, when deliverance was expected! Bruin was not absolutely a man of stone, and this agonizing appeal brought tears to his eyes. He gave some encouragement that, if Hill would consent, they need not be sent off with the gang. A sleepless night followed, spent in weeping, groaning and prayer. Morning at last dawned, and, according to orders received the day before, they prepared themselves to go, and even put on their bonnets and shawls, and stood ready for the word to be given. When the very last tear of hope was shed, and they were going out to join the gang, Bruin's heart relented. He called them to him, and told them they might remain! O, how glad were their hearts made by this, as they might *now* hope on a little longer! Either the entreaties of little Martha, or Mary's plea with Bruin, had prevailed.

Soon the gang was started on foot,—men, women and children, two and two, the men

all handcuffed together, the right wrist of one to the left wrist of the other, and a chain passing through the middle from the handcuffs of one couple to those of the next. The women and children walked in the same manner throughout, handcuffed or chained. Drivers went before and at the side, to take up those who were sick or lame. They were obliged to set off *singing!* accompanied with fiddles and banjos!—"For they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth." And this is a scene of daily occurrence in a Christian country!—and Christian ministers say that the right to do these things is *given by God himself!!*

Meanwhile poor old Paul Edmondson went northward to supplicate aid. Any one who should have traveled in the cars at that time might have seen a venerable-looking black man, all whose air and attitude indicated a patient humility, and who seemed to carry a weight of overwhelming sorrow, like one who had long been acquainted with grief. That man was Paul Edmondson.

Alone, friendless, unknown, and, worst of

all, black, he came into the great bustling city of New York, to see if there was any one there who would give him twenty-five hundred dollars to buy his daughters with. Can anybody realize what a poor man's feelings are, who visits a great, bustling, rich city, alone and unknown, for such an object? The writer has now, in a letter from a slave father and husband who was visiting Portland on a similar errand a touching expression of it:

"I walked all day, till I was tired and discouraged. Oh, Mrs. S—, when I see so many people who seem to have so many more things than they want or know what to do with, and then think that I have worked hard, till I am past forty, all my life, and don't own even my own wife and children, it makes me feel sick and discouraged."

So sick at heart and discouraged felt Paul Edmondson. He went to the Anti-Slavery Office, and made his case known. The sum was such a large one, and seemed to many so exorbitant, that, though they pitied the poor father, they were disheartened about raising it. They wrote to Washington to authenticate the particulars of the story, and

wrote to Bruin and Hill to see if there could be any reduction of price. Meanwhile, the poor old man looked sadly from one adviser to another. He was recommended to go to the Rev. H. W. Beecher, and tell his story. He inquired his way to his door,—ascended the steps to ring the door-bell, but his heart failed him,—he sat down on the steps weeping!

There Mr. Beecher found him. He took him in, and inquired his story. There was to be a public meeting that night, to raise money. The hapless father begged him to go and plead for his children. He did go, and spoke as if he were pleading for his own father and sisters. Other clergymen followed in the same strain,—the meeting became enthusiastic, and the money was raised on the spot, and poor old Paul laid his head that night on a grateful pillow,—not to sleep, but to give thanks!

Meanwhile the girls had been dragging on anxious days in the slave prison. They were employed in sewing for Bruin's family, staying sometimes in the prison and sometimes in the house.

It is to be stated here that Mr. Bruin is a man of very different character from many in his trade. He is such a man as never would have been found in the profession of a slave-trader, had not the most respectable and religious part of the community defended the right to buy and sell, as being conferred by God himself. It is a fact, with regard to this man, that he was one of the earliest subscribers to the *National Era*, in the District of Columbia; and, when a certain individual there brought himself into great peril by assisting fugitive slaves, and there was no one found to go bail for him, Mr. Bruin came forward and performed this kindness.

While we abhor the horrible system and the horrible trade with our whole soul, there is no harm, we suppose, in wishing that such a man had a better occupation. Yet we can not forbear reminding all such that, when we come to give our account at the judgment-seat of Christ, every man must speak *for himself alone*; and that Christ will not accept as an apology for sin the word of all the ministers and all the synods in the country. He has given fair warning, "Beware of false

prophets ;" and if people will not beware of them, their blood is upon their own heads.

The girls, while under Mr. Bruin's care, were treated with as much kindness and consideration as could possibly consist with the design of selling them. There is no doubt that Bruin was personally friendly to them, and really wished most earnestly that they might be ransomed ; but then he did not see how he was to lose two thousand five hundred dollars. He had just the same difficulty on this subject that some New York members of churches have had, when they have had slaves brought into their hands as security for southern debts. He was sorry for them, and wished them well, and hoped Providence would provide for them when they were sold, but still he could not afford to lose his money ; and while such men remain elders and communicants in churches in New York, we must not be surprised that there remain slave-traders in Alexandria.

It is one great art of the enemy of souls to lead men to compound for their participation in one branch of sin by their righteous horror of another. The slave-trader has been the

general scape-goat on whom all parties have vented their indignation, while buying of him and selling to him.

There is an awful warning given in the fiftieth Psalm to those who in word have professed religion and in deed consented to iniquity, where from the judgment-seat Christ is represented as thus addressing them: "What hast *thou* to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee? When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers."

One thing is certain, that all who do these things, openly or secretly, must, at last, make up their account with a Judge who is no respecter of persons, and who will just as soon condemn an elder in the church for slave-trading as a professed trader; nay, He may make it more tolerable for the Sodom and Gomorrah of the trade than for them,—for it may be, if the trader had the means of grace that they have had, that he would have repented long ago.

But to return to our history.—The girls were sitting sewing near the open window of their cage, when Emily said to Mary, “There, Mary, is that white man we have seen from the north.” They both looked, and in a moment more saw their own dear father. They sprang and ran through the house and the office, and into the street, shouting as they ran, followed by Bruin, who said he thought the girls were crazy. In a moment they were in their father’s arms, but observed that he trembled exceedingly, and that his voice was unsteady. They eagerly inquired if the money was raised for their ransom. Afraid of exciting their hopes too soon, before their free papers were signed, he said he would talk with them soon, and went into the office with Mr. Bruin and Mr. Chaplin. Mr. Bruin professed himself sincerely glad, as undoubtedly he was, that they had brought the money; but seemed much hurt by the manner in which he had been spoken of by the Rev. H. W. Beecher at the liberation meeting in New York, thinking it hard that no difference should be made between him and other traders, when he had

shown himself so much more considerate and humane than the great body of them. He, however, counted over the money and signed the papers with great good will, taking out a five dollar gold-piece for each of the girls, as a parting present.

The affair took longer than they supposed, and the time seemed an age to the poor girls, who were anxiously walking up and down outside the room, in ignorance of their fate. Could their father have brought the money? Why did he tremble so? Could he have failed of the money at last? Or could it be that their dear mother was dead, for they had heard that she was very ill!

At length a messenger came shouting to them, "You are free, you are free!" Emily thinks she sprang nearly to the ceiling overhead. They jumped, clapped their hands, laughed and shouted aloud. Soon their father came to them, embraced them tenderly and attempted to quiet them, and told them to prepare them to go and see their mother. This they did they know not how, but with considerable help from the family, who all seemed to rejoice in their joy. Their father

procured a carriage to take them to the wharf, and, with joy overflowing all bounds, they bade a most affectionate farewell to each member of the family, not even omitting Bruin himself. The "good that there is in human nature" for once had the upper hand, and all were moved to tears of sympathetic joy. Their father, with subdued tenderness, made great efforts to soothe their tumultuous feelings, and at length partially succeeded. When they arrived at Washington, a carriage was ready to take them to their sister's house. People of every rank and description came running together to get a sight of them. Their brothers caught them up in their arms, and ran about with them, almost frantic with joy. Their aged and venerated mother, raised up from a sick bed by the stimulus of the glad news, was there, weeping and giving thanks to God. Refreshments were prepared in their sister's house for all who called, and amid greetings and rejoicings, tears and gladness, prayers and thanksgivings, but without sleep, the night passed away, and the morning of November 4, 1848, dawned upon them free and happy.

This last spring, during the month of May, as the writer has already intimated, the aged mother of the Edmondson family came on to New York, and the reason of her coming may be thus briefly explained. She had still one other daughter, the guide and support of her feeble age, or, as she calls her in her own expressive language, "the last drop of blood in her heart." She had also a son, twenty-one years of age, still a slave on a neighboring plantation. The infirm woman in whose name the estate was held was supposed to be drawing near to death, and the poor parents were distressed with the fear that, in case of this event, their two remaining children would be sold for the purpose of dividing the estate, and thus thrown into the dreaded southern market. No one can realize what a constant horror the slave-prisons and the slave-traders are to all the unfortunate families in the vicinity. Everything for which other parents look on their children with pleasure and pride is to these poor souls a source of anxiety and dismay, because it renders the child so much more a merchantable article.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the light in Paul and Milly's cottage was overshadowed by this terrible idea.

The guardians of these children had given their father a written promise to sell them to him for a certain sum, and by hard begging he had acquired a hundred dollars towards the twelve hundred which were necessary. But he was now confined to his bed with sickness. After pouring out earnest prayers to the Helper of the helpless, Milly says, one day she said to Paul, "I tell ye, Paul, I'm going up to New York myself, to see if I can't get that money."

"Paul says to me, 'Why, Milly dear, how can you? Ye an't fit to be off the bed, and ye's never in the cars in your life.'

"'Never you fear, Paul,' says I; 'I shall go trusting in the Lord; and the Lord, He'll take me, and He'll bring me,—that I know.'

"So I went to the cars and got a white man to put me aboard; and, sure enough, there I found two Bethel ministers; and one set one side o' me, and one set the other, all the way; and they got me my tickets, and

looked after my things, and did everything for me. There didn't anything happen to me all the way. Sometimes, when I went to set down in the sitting-rooms, people looked at me and moved off so scornful! Well, I thought, I wish the Lord would give you a better mind."

Emily and Mary, who had been at school in New York State, came to the city to meet their mother, and they brought her directly to the Rev. Henry W. Beecher's house, where the writer then was.

The writer remembers now the scene when she first met this mother and daughters. It must be recollected that they had not seen each other before for four years. One was sitting each side the mother, holding her hand; and the air of pride and filial affection with which they presented her was touching to behold. After being presented to the writer, she again sat down between them, took a hand of each, and looked very earnestly first on one and then on the other; and then, looking up, said, with a smile, "O, these children,—how they do lie round our hearts!"

She then explained to the writer all her

sorrows and anxieties for the younger children. "Now, madam," she says, "that man that keeps the great trading-house at Alexandria, *that man*," she said, with a strong, indignant expression, "has sent to know if there's any more of my children to be sold. That man said he wanted to see *me*! Yes, ma'am, he said he'd give twenty dollars to see me. I would n't see him, if he'd give me a hundred! He sent for me to come and see him, when he had my daughters in his prison. I would n't go to see him,—I did n't want to see them there!"

The two daughters, Emily and Mary, here became very much excited, and broke out in some very natural but bitter language against all slave-holders. "Hush, children! you must forgive your enemies," she said. "But they're so wicked!" said the girls. "Ah, children, you must hate the *sin*, but love the *sinner*." "Well," said one of the girls, "mother, if I was taken again and made a slave of, I'd kill myself." "I trust not, child,—that would be wicked." "But, mother, I *should*; I know I never could bear it." "Bear it, my child?" she answered,

“it’s they that bears the sorrow here is they that has the glories there.”

There was a deep, indescribable pathos of voice and manner as she said these words,—a solemnity and force, and yet a sweetness, that can never be forgotten.

This poor slave-mother, whose whole life had been one long outrage on her holiest feelings,—who had been kept from the power to read God’s Word, whose whole pilgrimage had been made one day of sorrow by the injustice of a Christian nation,—she had yet learned to solve the highest problem of Christian ethics, and to do what so few reformers can do,—hate the *sin*, but love the *sinner*!

A great deal of interest was excited among the ladies in Brooklyn by this history. Several large meetings were held in different parlors, in which the old mother related her history with great simplicity and pathos, and a subscription for the redemption of the remaining two of her family was soon on foot. It may be interesting to know that the subscription list was headed by the lovely and benevolent Jenny Lind Goldschmidt.

Some of the ladies who listened to this touching story were so much interested in Mrs. Edmondson personally, they wished to have her daguerreotype taken; both that they might be strengthened and refreshed by the sight of her placid countenance, and that they might see the beauty of true goodness beaming there.

She accordingly went to the rooms with them, with all the simplicity of a little child. "O," said she, to one of the ladies, "you can't think how happy it's made me to get here, where everybody is *so kind* to me! Why, last night, when I went home, I was so happy I could n't sleep. I had to go and tell my Saviour, over and over again, how happy I was."

A lady spoke to her about reading something. "Law bless you, honey! I can't read a letter."

"Then," said another lady, "how have you learned so much of God, and heavenly things?"

"Well, 'pears like a *gift* from above."

"Can you have the Bible read to you?"

"Why, yes; Paul, he reads a little, but

then he has so much work all day, and when he gets home at night he's so tired! and his eyes is bad. But then the *Spirit* teaches us."

"Do you go much to meeting?"

"Not much now, we live so far. In winter I can't never. But, O! what meetings I have had, alone in the corner,—my Saviour and only me!" The smile with which these words were spoken was a thing to be remembered. A little girl, daughter of one of the ladies, made some rather severe remarks about somebody in the daguerreotype rooms, and her mother checked her.

The old lady looked up, with her placid smile. "That puts me in mind," she said, "of what I heard a preacher say once. 'My friends,' says he, 'if you know of anything that will make a brother's heart glad *run quick and tell it*; but if it is something that will only cause a sigh, 'bottle it up, bottle it up!' O, I often tell my children, 'Bottle it up, bottle it up!'"

When the writer came to part with the old lady, she said to her: "Well, good-by, my dear friend; remember and pray for me."

“Pray for *you*!” she said, earnestly. “Indeed I shall,—I can’t help it.” She then, raising her finger, said, in an emphatic tone, peculiar to the old of her race, “Tell you what! we never gets no good bread ourselves till we begins *to ask for our brethren*.”

The writer takes this opportunity to inform all those friends, in different parts of the country, who generously contributed for the redemption of these children, that they are *at last free*!

The following extract from the letter of a lady in Washington may be interesting to them:

“I have seen the Edmondson parents,—Paul and his wife Milly. I have seen the *free* Edmondsons,—mother, son, and daughter,—the very day after the great era of *free life* commenced, while yet the inspiration was on them, while the mother’s face was all light and love, the father’s eyes moistened and glistening with tears, the son calm in conscious manhood and responsibility, the daughter (not more than fifteen years old, I think) smiling a delightful appreciation of

joy in the present and hope in the future, thus suddenly and completely unfolded."

Thus have we finished the account of one of the families who were taken on board the *Pearl*. We have another history to give, to which we can not promise so fortunate a termination.

CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

The history you have been reading is one that happened in your country—under laws which every republican voter has a voice in sustaining.

The Edmondson family were born and raised for market in the District of Columbia, territory belonging to the whole United States, and for whose laws the whole Union is responsible. There the sisters were sold, and the cruelties that have been narrated had their origin.

If the gospel of Jesus Christ, as preached in America, has not power enough to destroy such a system as this, what hope have you that it can destroy the barbarous system of heathen nations? Can *you* do nothing? Have you a voice, a pen, a vote; have you influence, time, money? Will not God hold you accountable if you do *not* labor by all these to remove this stain from your country?

PRAYER FOR THE NEGRO.

BY MISS M. B. TUCKEY.

Jesus! from thy dwelling-place,
Look on Afric's captive race;
While their bitter groans ascend,
Let thy willing ear attend;
Thou who never didst deny
Pity to the mourner's cry,
Hear the prayer we send to thee,
Set the injured negro free.

Man—a broken reed at best,
Wounds the hands that on him rest:
Human power, 'tis empty fame;
He who trusts it trusts a name.
Thou, who didst for sin atone,
All unaided and alone,
Lo! in faith we turn to thee,
Set the injured negro free.